United Nations S/2015/699

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 September 2015

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 29 May to 28 August 2015

I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the past three months, pursuant to the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended in subsequent resolutions, most recently resolution 2229 (2015).

II. Situation in the area and activities of the Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic generally was maintained, albeit in a continuously volatile environment attributable to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and notwithstanding a number of significant violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (Disengagement of Forces Agreement) of 1974, which are set out below. The Syrian armed forces carried out military activities and security operations against armed groups, often in response to offensives carried out by the armed groups in the area of separation and the area of limitation on the Bravo side. Inside the area of separation, the presence of the Syrian armed forces and military equipment, as well as any other armed personnel and military equipment other than that of UNDOF, is in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. As underscored by the Security Council in its resolution 2229 (2015), there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.

3. A number of significant incidents occurred across the ceasefire line in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. On 13 June, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 observed nine rockets being fired from locations in the vicinity of Um Batinah and Mashara in the area of separation. The rockets landed in the area south of the observation post, with at least two landing west of the ceasefire line. The following night, on 14 June, four rockets were fired from a location in Mashara, three of which landed across the ceasefire line. On 3 August, United Nations personnel at the UNDOF operational base, Camp Ziouani, heard two heavy explosions from a north-western direction. The following day, an Observer Group Golan investigation team confirmed that at least one rocket had landed on the Alpha side, approximately one and a half kilometres from Camp Ziouani. The

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results of the investigation suggested that the round was fired from the Bravo side. Syrian authorities subsequently informed UNDOF that a Palestinian "terrorist cell" had been responsible for the rockets fired across the ceasefire line on 3 August.

4. In the early evening of 20 August, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) informed UNDOF that the Israel Defense Forces had conveyed to UNIFIL that two rockets had been launched from the Bravo side of the UNDOF area of operations across the ceasefire line with the Syrian Arab Republic into northern Israel, impacting in the vicinity of Qiryat Shmona. Shortly thereafter, at approximately 1830 hours, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that two rockets fired by Palestinian Islamic Jihad from new Quneitra had impacted in the vicinity of Qiryat Shmona. Approximately one hour later, UNDOF personnel on the Alpha side heard three rockets launched from the north of Camp Ziouani, and United Nations personnel at position 22 observed one rocket fired from an Israel Defense Forces position in their vicinity. UNDOF personnel also observed a rocket fired from the Alpha side moving in an easterly direction towards the Bravo side. At the same time, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 observed two projectiles impacting in the vicinity of Al Ba'ath. On 20 August, at 2330 hours, UNDOF personnel observed six heavy explosions in the area of separation, approximately 10 kilometres east of Buq'ata, followed by a series of continual anti-aircraft gunfire from Khan Arnabah and Al Ba'ath. Shortly thereafter, UNDOF personnel in observation post 51 heard a helicopter overhead and observed firing in Khan Arnabah and Al Ba'ath in the central part of the area of separation, while at the same time UNDOF personnel at United Nations position Hermon South and at observation post 51 observed nine heavy explosions in Khan Arnabah. On the morning of 21 August, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that it had fired at a Palestinian Islamic Jihad position near new Quneitra in the area of separation in response to the 20 August attack and to pre-empt further attacks. UNDOF was not in a position to observe the alleged rocket firing from the Bravo side or ascertain the points of origin or impact of the rockets. The Syrian armed forces informed UNDOF that the rockets had not been fired from their positions. The Senior Syrian Arab Delegate informed UNDOF that an Israel Defense Forces air strike had targeted the headquarters of a Syrian armed forces brigade in Sa'sa'. Throughout these developments, the Force Commander remained in contact with the Syrian authorities and the Israel Defense Forces urging them to exercise maximum restraint and prevent escalation of the situation.

5. In addition, on 13 and 14 June, 6 July and 3 and 17 August, six incidents of firing across the ceasefire line, including with heavy machine guns, anti-aircraft machine guns and small arms, occurred as a result of the clashes on the Bravo side. In the course of the fighting, several rounds of machine gun and small arms fire impacted across the ceasefire line.

6. Crossing of the ceasefire line by civilians, primarily shepherds, was observed on an almost daily basis. On at least five occasions in June, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed interactions between persons from the Bravo side and the Israel Defense Forces at an Israeli technical fence gate, including the transfer of persons, mainly on stretchers, from the Bravo to the Alpha side and from the Alpha to the Bravo side. In addition, on 12 June, United Nations personnel at observation post 73 observed an Israel Defense Forces patrol on the Alpha side accompanied by two armoured personnel carriers and a bulldozer. The Israel Defense Forces patrol met with a small group of armed persons from the Bravo side

west of the ceasefire line. Following the meeting, the Israel Defense Forces personnel, along with the armoured personnel carriers and bulldozer, moved south, after which the UNDOF personnel lost sight of them.

7. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed by the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line. UNDOF protested all firing across the ceasefire line to the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate and the Israel Defense Forces. All incidents of firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing by individuals of the ceasefire line, are violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In his regular interactions with both sides, the Force Commander continued to call upon both parties to the Disengagement Agreement to exercise utmost restraint and prevent an escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line.

8. UNDOF observed and reported almost daily instances of transborder movements of unidentified individuals, some of whom were armed and observed firing occasionally at positions of the Syrian armed forces, between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in the northern part of the area of separation.

9. In the context of the Syrian conflict, after several months of relative quiet in the northern parts of the areas of separation and limitation, intense fighting erupted during the reporting period in Hadar, straddling the Bravo line, Jabbata, in the area of separation, and Bayt Jinn, in the area of limitation. Armed groups attacked positions of the Syrian armed forces to the east and north-east of Hadar. On 16 June, armed groups operating in the Bayt Jinn enclave broke out of that area towards the west and south-west in an apparent effort to link up with armed groups in Jabbata in the area of separation. Initially, the armed groups took over positions of the Syrian armed forces on a hill that dominates the surrounding terrain, 2 kilometres north-east of Hadar. The attack was supported with indirect mortar fire by armed groups operating in the central part of the area of separation, south-west of Khan Arnabah. In the days following the attack, Syrian armed forces engaged armed groups with heavy artillery fire and air strikes as the armed groups approached their positions from both the north and the south, in the vicinity of vacated United Nations position 31, near a road junction linking Bayt Jinn with Jabbata. Clashes continued between Syrian armed forces and armed groups to gain control of the hill situated north-east of Hadar. From 19 to 21 June, UNDOF observed at least 27 air strikes conducted by Syrian armed forces in the northern and central parts of the areas of separation and limitation, primarily around the village of Hadar. Syrian armed forces maintained their positions and retain control of the road network leading north-east to Bayt Jinn. On a number of occasions during July and August, armed groups attacked positions of the Syrian armed forces in the northern parts of the areas of separation and limitation. Syrian armed forces continued to engage in direct and indirect fire to contain armed groups in Jabbata, Trunje and Ufaniyah in the area of separation and in Bayt Jinn, Mazra'at Bayt Jinn and Mughur al-Mir in the area of limitation.

10. On 22 August, United Nations personnel at position Hermon Hotel observed a group of five armed elements open fire on a Syrian armed forces patrol on Mount Hermon in the northern part of the area of separation. Two Syrian armed forces personnel were injured and three were detained by the armed group. United Nations personnel at position Hermon Base observed the armed elements taking the detained

Syrian armed forces personnel towards the direction of Shab'a in Lebanon, leaving the injured two on the scene, who were later evacuated by the Syrian armed forces.

11. In the central part of the areas of separation and limitation, the situation remained largely unchanged. UNDOF observed intermittent exchanges of artillery, mortar and heavy machine gun fire. During the clashes that occurred around Hadar, on 17 June, armed groups launched simultaneous attacks targeting Tal al-Kurum in the area of separation and Tal ash Shar, Tal al Bassaq and the town of Jaba in the area of limitation, using direct and indirect fire. The attacks were repelled by Syrian armed forces.

12. Armed groups continued to exercise control of most of the southern parts of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. The Syrian armed forces targeted with artillery fire locations along the front line between them and armed groups in Mashara, Kafr Nasij, Kafr Shams, Al Harrah, Zamrin and Simlin. On 3 June, UNDOF observed air strikes north-west of AlMuallaqah along the Bravo line. In the southern part of the area of limitation, UNDOF observed intermittent clashes in the vicinity of Al Magles, Abu Hasar, Lurkasi, Ain Dhakar, Tasil, Ash Shajarah and Ain Nafiah. Although the United Nations does not have the means to verify reports independently, several sources indicated that fighting continued between the coalition led by Jabhat al-Nusra, a listed terrorist group and an affiliate of Al-Qaida, and the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, which reportedly has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant group.

13. As a reaction to the intense fighting in and around Hadar, which is a village populated by members of the Druze community on the Bravo side, Druze residents on the Alpha side organized several demonstrations related to the perception of an increased threat to the Druze population on the Bravo side. The demonstrations took place on 15 and 16 June in Majdal Chams on the Alpha side, an area close to United Nations observation post 73. During the demonstrations on 16 June, approximately 50 vehicles and an estimated 300 demonstrators blocked the gate to United Nations observation post 73. United Nations personnel were not the target of the demonstrators. During the demonstrations of the Druze residents on the Alpha side on 22 June in the vicinity of Majdal Chams, a group of Druze attacked an Israeli military ambulance, which, on the basis of information provided by the Israel Defense Forces, was transporting two wounded combatants from the Bravo side. The demonstrators extracted the wounded from the ambulance and beat them, killing one individual and critically injuring the other. An Israel Defense Forces soldier was also injured during the incident.

14. Several incidents that jeopardized United Nations personnel and facilities occurred. On 13 and 17 June, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 took shelter on five occasions as a result of several rounds of fire having landed close to the observation post, some of which also crossed the ceasefire line. There was no injury to personnel and no damage to property at the post. On 14 June, armed individuals fired 12 rounds of gunfire in the direction of six UNDOF personnel on foot patrol in the Mount Hermon area, 3 of which landed close to the UNDOF patrol. A reinforcement team was dispatched immediately to assist and recover the patrol under fire. The incident did not result in injury to personnel or damage to United Nations property. The investigation into the incident was unable to verify the identity of the perpetrators. On two occasions during the reporting period, the Sheraton Hotel in Damascus, which houses the temporary headquarters of UNDOF

and accommodates international staff members, came under mortar fire. On 27 July, three mortars exploded in the parking area of the hotel, causing extensive material damage to three UNDOF vehicles. No United Nations personnel were wounded. All staff in the temporary headquarters remained in the designated shelter of the hotel for one hour. On 3 August, one mortar hit the hotel compound without causing injuries to any person or damage to United Nations property. Following the incidents of 27 July and 3 August, the Sheraton Hotel in Damascus was assessed to be a very high risk location. As a consequence, UNDOF is undertaking a programme criticality review of the functions carried out at its headquarters and representational office in Damascus and identifying options for relocation. UNDOF continues to conduct regular security assessments of its locations to mitigate threats to the safety and security of its personnel.

15. On 2 June, in two separate incidents, UNDOF observed stolen United Nations armoured vehicles with scratched but visible United Nations markings in the area of limitation on the Bravo side. One of the vehicles was seen moving between Sayda and Brudjum, and the other was seen in Ghadir al-Bustan.

16. During the reporting period, the Syrian armed forces maintained their positions in the area of separation, particularly around the urban centres of Al Baath and Khan Arnabah and the latter's southern approaches, as well as in the area of Al Wisiyah in the area of limitation, along the main road connecting Quneitra to Damascus. Additional Syrian armed forces weapons, armoured vehicles and artillery weapons were observed in the surroundings of Hadar. The Syrian armed forces generally deployed six tanks in the area of separation, including at their position at Tal al-Kurum, and several others at locations immediately adjacent to the area of separation. During the fighting around Hadar on 4 August, UNDOF observed one tank operating east of United Nations observation post 73, within the area of separation. On 17 June, during the attack targeting locations south of Khan Arnabah, armed groups were seen using at least two tanks in Um Batinah in the area of limitation and five artillery guns that were deployed in Ruihinah. Units of Syrian armed forces were seen using areas around the temporarily vacated United Nations position 10 and observation post 71 as firing and observation positions.

17. UNDOF protested the presence of Syrian armed forces and equipment in the area of separation and the firing into and inside the area of separation. The Force Commander reiterated to the Syrian authorities the obligation of the Syrian armed forces to halt military operations in the area of separation and to cease firing from the area of limitation, stressing the importance of abiding by the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground.

18. On several occasions during the reporting period, UNDOF observed armed and unarmed persons digging out and removing landmines from around United Nations position 80 in the vicinity of the ceasefire line. On 19 July, United Nations personnel at observation post 73 observed an explosion of an anti-personnel mine close to the observation post. Prior to the explosion, two shepherds and a flock of sheep were seen in the vicinity. After the explosion, the shepherds were observed to be unharmed.

19. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed up to six different locations where tents had been set up for internally displaced persons in the area of separation. UNDOF observed around 75 tents north-west of Al Aishah village,

straddling the ceasefire line. Between 20 and 30 persons were observed in the camp on a regular basis. Three tents were observed in the vicinity of Al Asbah and, sporadically, UNDOF personnel observed persons present in the camp. In the village of Kudnaa in the area of limitation, six tents were observed. Another five tents were seen in an area along the ceasefire line opposite the village of Braika. Further south, 17 tents were observed. Between 10 and 15 tents were observed at a location straddling the Bravo line north-west of the village of Ain Kadi. No individuals were observed at those tented camps. Owing to the closure of the established crossing between the Alpha and Bravo sides since late August 2014, UNDOF is not currently in a position to facilitate, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, humanitarian crossings, including for students, between the Alpha and the Bravo sides.

20. In its current configuration, UNDOF has continued to carry out its mandate by maintaining visibility, albeit limited, of the area of separation and the ceasefire line from a number of positions it continues to hold in the area of separation. The Force continued to maintain four positions on Mount Hermon in the northern part of the area of separation and position 80 in the southern part, as well as position 22 on the Alpha side. UNDOF regularly conducted daily foot and vehicle patrols on Mount Hermon. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the military observers in Observer Group Golan of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), who maintained five fixed and four temporary observation posts on the Alpha side. The focus of the activities of Observer Group Golan remained on around-the-clock static observation, investigations and situational analysis. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied Observer Group Golan inspection teams. Inspections and mobile operations in the area of limitation on the Bravo side remained suspended because of the security situation. As in the past, the Force faced restrictions on freedom of movement, and its inspection teams were denied access to some positions on the Alpha side.

21. During the reporting period, United Nations personnel observed 155 mm artillery weapons on numerous occasions on the Alpha side within 10 kilometres of the ceasefire line, in positions and on flatbed trucks. On 27 and 30 July, one multiple-launch rocket system was observed being transported on a flatbed truck. On 23 and 24 August, United Nations personnel observed an Iron Dome defence system deployed at an Israel Defense Forces position on the Alpha side within 10 kilometres of the ceasefire line. Observer Group Golan members continued to experience restrictions of movement on the Alpha side related to delays by the Israel Defense Forces in opening the technical fence gate when military observers enter and exit United Nations observation posts 54 and 73, which are located east of the Israeli technical fence. Access to United Nations observation posts from the Alpha side, however, has improved since my last report. Of particular note, access to observation post 73 is now granted on a daily basis, as required, although limited to two gate openings per day. UNDOF peacekeepers remained deployed at observation posts 54 and 73 to enhance protection of the military observers.

22. Since the temporary relocation of UNDOF from a number of its positions on the Bravo side in September 2014, UNDOF, in consultation with the parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation. The ultimate goal of UNDOF is to return fully to the area of separation when the situation permits. In

this connection, UNDOF assessed that the prevailing security situation in the area of separation was not currently conducive to such a return. Planning on the basis of the prevailing security developments in the area of separation and area of limitation on the Bravo side and taking into consideration the financial and personnel resources required, UNDOF remained focused on maintaining its operational effectiveness to support and maintain the Force in its current configuration. UNDOF is in the process of strengthening its positions and presence in the Mount Hermon area. In an effort to enhance the ability of the Force to sustain the Mount Hermon positions, UNDOF commenced the expansion of position 12 and the development of position 12A. The Force reserve company, the heavy equipment platoon and other contingents were deployed to support the construction of position 12A and clear the site. Once the extension work has been completed, the positions will accommodate an additional 50 troops. This will facilitate the sustainment of the Mount Hermon complex during the winter.

23. In the meantime, UNDOF continued to engage the parties on practical arrangements to be put in place to establish an interim configuration of the Force that would allow it to continue to maintain the ceasefire, monitor, verify and report on violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and exercise its critical liaison functions with the parties in order to implement its mandate until the Force can return fully to the area of separation. Discussions with both parties continued with respect to agreeing on procedures for UNDOF personnel crossing between the Alpha and the Bravo sides in the absence of an established crossing at Quneitra. UNDOF also continued to engage with the parties on the use of technology to offset the lack of situational awareness in the area of separation. In addition, discussions with the Alpha side continued with respect to additional locations required to establish temporary United Nations positions for observing the ceasefire line from the Alpha side.

24. UNDOF continued to resupply its positions on Mount Hermon from Damascus. UNDOF convoys between Damascus and the Mount Hermon positions are conducted on an almost daily basis in armoured vehicles and with an UNDOF security escort, accompanied by a liaison officer from the office of the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate. UNDOF continued to carry out contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts and to update its contingency planning for the relocation and evacuation of United Nations personnel on both the Alpha and Bravo sides and in Damascus. UNDOF, through its Force reserve company, conducted regular exercises and training. The company remains at two UNDOF locations, Camp Ziouani and position 80.

25. The implementation of risk mitigation measures continued at observation posts, positions, the operational base at Camp Ziouani and the temporary headquarters in Damascus. A new reinforced roof was placed at observation post 54. Additional sand-filled gabions were placed at various locations at Camp Ziouani and positions 12 and 80. At position 12, two protected posts were added along the perimeter wall. At Camp Ziouani, shatter-resistant film was applied to windows exposed to the area of separation. At the temporary headquarters of UNDOF in Damascus, mitigation measures were put in place to reinforce security doors and access control at the entrance to the offices and accommodation. After the mortar incidents of 27 July and 3 August, additional precautionary procedures were put in place to reduce the exposure of United Nations personnel. Movement of UNDOF personnel on the Bravo side remains limited.

26. As at 26 August, UNDOF comprised 799 troops, including 24 women, from Bhutan (1), the Czech Republic (3), Fiji (300), India (192), Ireland (141), Nepal (160) and the Netherlands (2). In addition, 69 military observers from UNTSO, including 3 women, assisted the Force in carrying out its tasks.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

27. The Security Council, when deciding in its resolution 2229 (2015) to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, until 31 December 2015, called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973) and requested the Secretary-General to submit, every 90 days, a report on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement that resolution. The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was dealt with in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/70/353), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 69/24 on Jerusalem and 69/25 on the Syrian Golan.

28. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. The Syrian conflict is further reducing the prospects for their resumption and progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

IV. Observations

29. I note with concern the serious violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that have taken place. The firing of rockets and gunfire from the Bravo side and the Israel Defense Forces rocket fire and air strikes across the ceasefire line jeopardize the long-term ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. The developments of 13 and 14 June and 20 August across the ceasefire line are of deep concern. Significantly, the alleged rocket fire into Israel on 20 August would be the first such strike from the Syrian Arab Republic into Israel since the conclusion of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. It remains critical that the parties maintain liaison with UNDOF in the first instance to prevent any escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. The mandate of UNDOF remains an important element in ensuring the stability of the region. For its part, the United Nations will spare no effort in ensuring that the long-held ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic continues to hold.

30. I am gravely concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, its impact on the Syrian population and its potential implications for the stability of the region. These developments have continued to significantly affect the UNDOF area of operations. The presence of the Syrian armed forces and unauthorized military equipment in the area of separation are grave violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The increased use of heavy weapons by both the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the continuing Syrian conflict, including the use of air power by government forces in the area of limitation on the Bravo side, is disturbing. Armed opposition groups and

other armed groups continue to maintain control over significant sections of the areas of separation and limitation in the southern part of the UNDOF area of operations and remain present along the section of the main road connecting the two UNDOF camps. The established crossing between the Alpha and the Bravo sides remains closed.

31. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. I note with concern the increasing presence and use of tanks and heavy weapons by the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the area of separation. I urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to stop the use of air strikes. I call upon all parties to the Syrian conflict to cease military actions throughout the country, including in the UNDOF area of operations, and remove all military equipment, Syrian armed forces personnel and armed personnel from the area of separation. I urge the Israel Defense Forces to stop carrying out air strikes across the ceasefire line. The continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on the Alpha side is of concern.

32. I call upon countries with influence to strongly and urgently convey to the armed groups in the UNDOF area of operations the need to cease any actions in violation of the Disengagement Agreement between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic that jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to accord United Nations personnel the freedom to carry out their mandate safely and securely. I remain concerned about the incidents that have jeopardized United National personnel and facilities. Any hostile act against United Nations personnel, including threatening their physical safety, restricting their movement and direct and indirect firing at United Nations personnel and facilities by anyone, is unacceptable. The safety and security of United Nations personnel must be ensured. I reiterate that all military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor pose a risk to the ceasefire and to the local civilian population, in addition to the United Nations personnel on the ground. I call upon all parties to take all measures necessary to protect civilians.

33. The primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side rests with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

34. The continued presence of UNDOF in the area remains essential. Both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic have stated their continued commitment to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the presence of UNDOF. I call upon both parties to actively assist UNDOF in achieving its interim configuration in structure and deployment as quickly as possible to ensure that the mission is in a position to effectively implement its mandate, until such time as the security situation allows the Force to return fully to the area of separation. I note the assistance provided by the Governments of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic in facilitating the provision of essential supplies in support of the Force. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation remains a priority for the mission. In planning and preparing for this full return, the safety and security of United Nations personnel remains the primary consideration in determining the exact modalities.

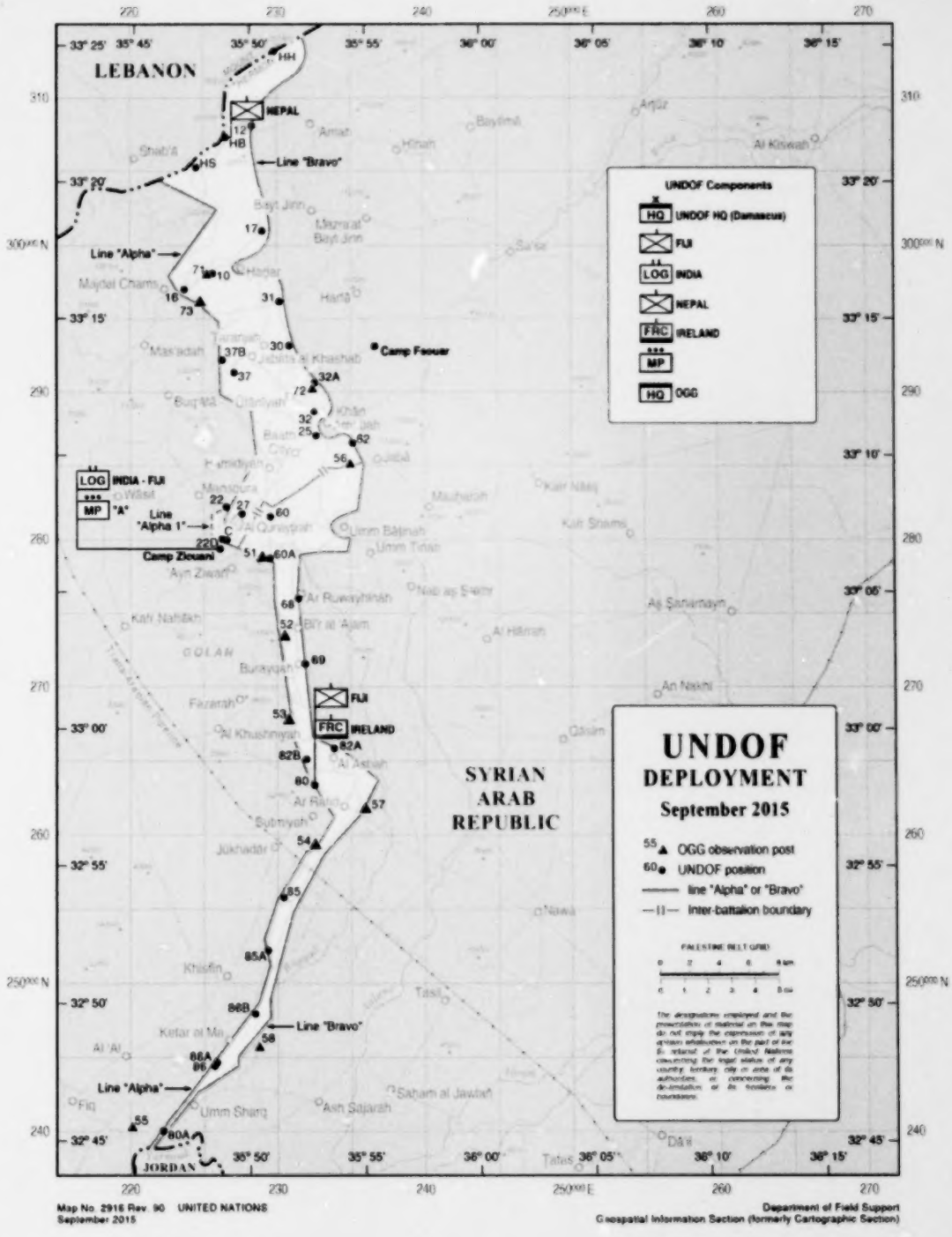
35. It is equally critical that the Security Council continue to bring its influence to bear on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate freely. It is essential that UNDOF continue to have at its disposal all the

means and resources necessary to allow it to return fully to the area of separation as the situation permits.

36. The confidence and commitment of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF remain key factors for the mission's ability to continue to carry out its mandate. I am grateful to the Governments of Fiji, India, Ireland, Nepal and the Netherlands for their contributions. I am also thankful to the Governments of Bhutan and the Czech Republic for delivering on their commitments of new contributions to UNDOF. In addition, I am grateful to the Member States contributing military observers to UNTSO.

37. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Purna Chandra Thapa, and the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership who continue to perform with efficiency and commitment and under challenging circumstances the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council. I have full confidence that UNDOF will continue to use its best efforts to carry out its mission.

Annex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DEPLOYMENT
September 2015
OGG observation post
UNDOF position
line "Alpha" or "Bravo"
Inter-battalion boundary
PALESTINE BELT GRID
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September 2015
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